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ABSTRACT

This manual was created to give rural American Indian youths ways to build their self-concept, spiritual strength, and, thus, improve their ability to achieve success. This document draws heavily from anecdotal material--Indian lore and the author's personal experiences--to encourage good social conduct by Indian youth. It suggests that everyone has a gift, and encourages young people to identify their own abilities as artists, decision-makers, forecasters, planners, leaders, workers, or academic achievers. This manual emphasizes the importance of establishing good peer relationships and identifies traits found in a worthy friend. It teaches lessons about making good first impressions as a means of getting ahead. It offers examples of positive words people use to make an impact. This manual encourages young people to identify and overcome their fears of failure in the realization that they can make a difference in the world. It encourages students to start making plans to attend college by making good grades, establishing good relationships with teachers, preparing to take admissions tests and complete applications, saving money, learning about scholarships, and seeking guidance from Indian graduates. This manual stresses the importance of spiritual roots, and encourages faith in God. It offers a plan to help young people begin an Indian revolution, encouraging them toward personal introspection for the development of self-esteem and spiritual strength. This document includes two workbook sections that young people are encouraged to fill out as a means of identifying their abilities, plans, and goals. (TES)

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MY DREAMS HOPES AND VISIONS

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AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKAN NATIVE YOUTH 2000

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C O N T E N T S

Dedication	2
Step One: Know What You Have Going For You	3
Step Two: Know Who Your Real Friends Are	7
Step Three: Know How to Make a Good Impression - It Counts in Getting Ahead	9
Step Four: Know the Power of Words and their Effect on People and You	12
Step Five: Know When to Say No	15
Step Six: Know What is Holding You Back and Do Something About It	18
Step Seven: Know That You Do Make a Difference	20
Step Eight: Know What You Want and Start Preparing Now!	22
Step Nine: Know That Failure Is a Part of Success	25
Step Ten: Know That Strength and Inner Peace Come from Spiritual Roots	28
Final Thoughts	30
Inspirational Message to Indian Youth by Howard T. Rainer	31
About the Author	34
My Dreams, Hopes, and Visions	35

This self-development manual is dedicated to a young Indian man I heard at a national Indian youth conference. He boldly stood among hundreds of other Indian youth and declared that he was not an Indian leader of tomorrow, but was ready to be one today!

There are hundreds of you just like him who have the heart, good mind, and talents to make a powerful impact in your schools, in your Indian communities, and on the future of Indian people.

It is my desire that this manual might provide you with some important working tools that can help you achieve, succeed, and open your door of opportunity!

---by Howard Rainer

STEP 1

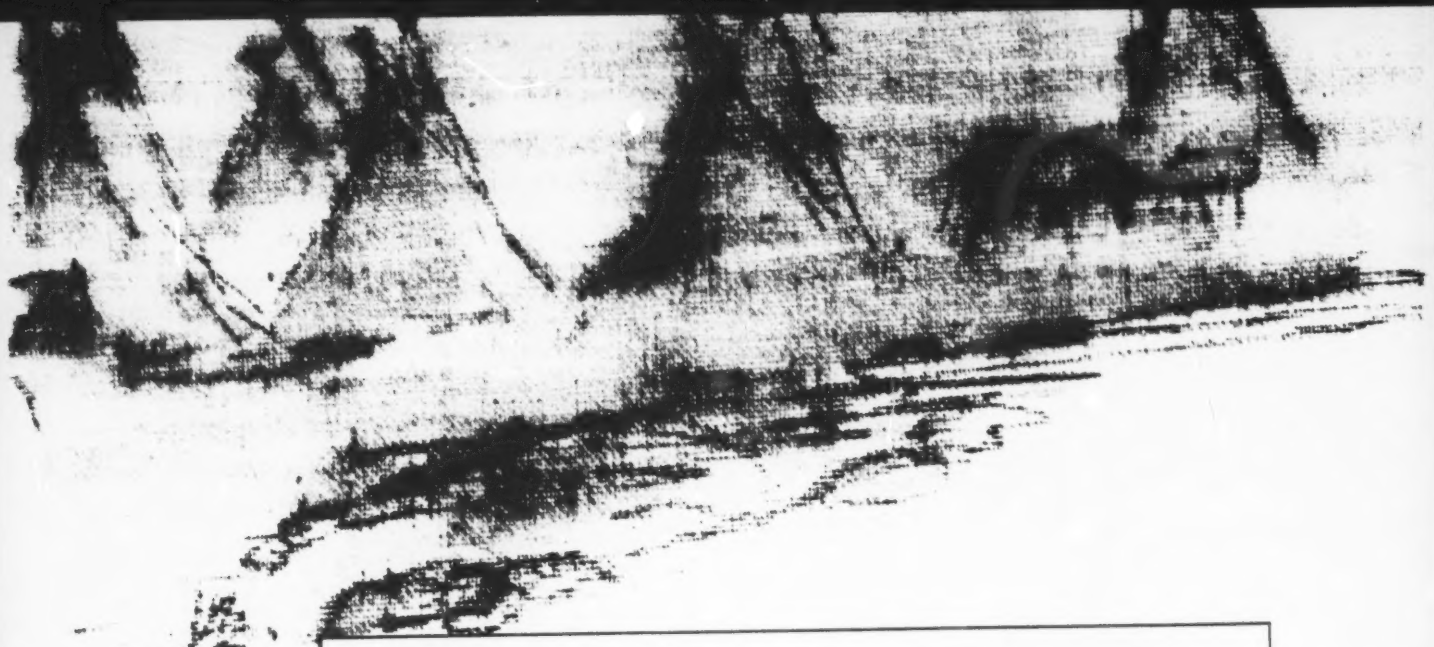
KNOW WHAT YOU HAVE COING FOR YOU

In many of my visits over the years to Indian high schools. public schools, and tribe-operated alternative schools, I have seen many Indian students hide their talents, their genius, and most important of all, their goodness within them.

I have asked hundreds of Indian young people what they are good at, whether they are smart, and what they are going to do after high school. So many have sadly hung their heads, turned away, or simply giggled and said the standard escape words, "I DON'T KNOW!"

EVERYBODY HAS A GIFT, AND THAT MEANS YOU TOO!

Everybody has a gift, but some of us don't know how to unwrap it yet and share it with others--we keep our talents and gifts hidden in a self-conscious box. Sometimes, this box is never opened. Which kind of gift do you have?



1. ***One of you may have a gift in academics.*** It is easy for you to learn, to recall, to memorize, to take and pass tests, to acquire large amounts of knowledge without much effort.

2. ***Some of you are very creative.*** You have the great ability to design, to draw, to create, or to conceptualize all kinds of things. You have the ability to use colors, shapes, and design without much effort. You can already visualize a painting, a poem, a story, or a picture before it has been created. You are one of those lucky few who can put all the artistic elements together and make them blend beautifully.

3. ***Some of you are excellent planners.*** You know how to organize a group of people and get things done. You have the ability to influence others, and they listen to you. You are able to incorporate ideas, suggestions, and all the logistical challenges to make things happen. You are a very valuable asset to an organization, club, or team. You are one of those rare individuals who sees in advance all the challenges of creating a worthwhile activity or event.

4. ***One of you may be an excellent forecaster.*** You are one of those people fortunate enough to be able to see things ahead of their time. Sometimes it is frustrating because your mind and your abilities surpass all things around you. You can see the future in realistic terms—how it can be shaped, how destiny can take a different course. You have the ability to look at conditions as they are and see how to make significant changes. You are important because you could play a vital role in shaping and building the Indian's future.

5. ***Some of you are decision makers.*** You are the lucky in-

dividuals who have the ability to make a decision and go with it. While others ponder and doubt their own common sense and intellect, you make intelligent decisions and set a course of action. You have what some people might term "horse sense." You are able to weigh in your mind the pros and cons of a situation and make decisions that are logical and functional.

6. ***Some of you are gifted with the ability to lead.*** You are lucky—you have a thing called "charisma." People naturally want to follow you, listen to you, look at you. You have within yourself the power to make people think and act. Good leaders are always in great demand.

7. ***One of you may be an excellent worker.*** You have the gift of knowing how to work and how to create meaningful tasks. People will hire you. You are already in demand. People are willing to pay you a good salary because you radiate and motivate people around you.

Remember, let people see and share your gifts—they can open doors!

You cannot afford to be one of those who does not know where he or she is headed after high school, after college, after the military service, after you become a young adult.

"I DON'T KNOW INDIANS" cannot be helped or directed, because they give the impression that they don't care, don't want help, or don't expect much from life. "I DON'T KNOW INDIANS" don't know what they have going for them. These five little questions need to be answered only by you. Then get someone you trust to share your answers with and see what he or she thinks about your potential, your future!

These five questions need to be answered only by you.

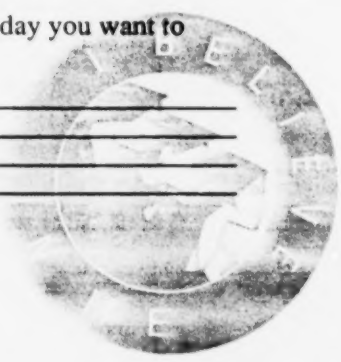
1. If someone were to ask you if you were smart or intelligent, what would you say and how could you prove you are? (How will people treat you if you say you aren't?)

2. If someone were to ask you what your future plans are and what you specifically plan to do after high school, what three goals could you mention?

3. If people were to ask you what your talents and natural abilities are, what three things could you share with them? (The more specific, the better.)

4. What are two things you know you have going for you that you feel especially good about?

5. What is something you dream about doing that someday you **want to** come true?



STEP 2

KNOW WHO YOUR REAL FRIENDS ARE

If you want to get ahead in life, "CHOOSE THE RIGHT KINDS OF FRIENDS!" Your future can, and does, depend greatly on the kinds of friends you have.

What makes a good friend? Here are ten identifiable traits that I have found make a good friend.

A GOOD FRIEND IS:

1. One who does not pressure you to use alcohol or take drugs. He/she values your life and your future.

2. One who WANTS YOU TO SUCCEED and will not make fun of you or reject you if you excel at something or make good grades.

3. One who respects himself/herself and wants something good out of life themselves.

4. One who will stand up for your good character and image at all costs. He/she will not run away when the pressure is on.

5. One who can be found in good places--a place he/she feels good about patronizing.

6. One who cares about people and their community and wants to help improve them.

7. One who does not pressure you to get into trouble or to run away.

8. One who is not greedy and who will share with you as well as others. He/she is sensitive to others and cares about people.

9. One who is looking out for your best interests. He/she wants only the best for you and will support you in your time of need.

10. One who helps make you feel good about yourself and who you are proud to be around.

A friend, or friends, influences us daily in how we think, how we feel about ourselves, and what we will do in the future. We must choose our friends wisely. They are one of the important keys to success or setbacks in our life.

"ONE GOOD FRIEND IS WORTH A HUNDRED WHO ONLY SAY THEY ARE!"

STEP 3

Know How to Make a Good Impression—It Counts in Getting Ahead

If there is one principle of success that is so important in life, it would have to be learning how to make a good first impression—or putting your best foot forward. So many outstanding Indian youth I have met across America and Canada have had doors slammed in their faces already somewhere because they gave the wrong impression about themselves.

When I visit a high school, I sometimes have 300 Indian youth in a workshop at one time. Those who made a good first impression, I remember. I know that this does not sound fair, but doors are slammed or opened every day according to the way we act, by the things we say or don't say, and by our body language or facial expression.

If I get a weak or "wimpy" handshake from Indian students who turn away from me or hang their heads down or back away from me, it is hard to remember them or their names. But, if they stand tall, look me in the eye, and shake my hand firmly, I give them a second look.

Whether you are going after a job or a scholarship, trying to make the team, or trying to impress your first boss or teacher, your first impression does count. It counts because people will or will not remember us by our first contact with them.

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Remember, if you want to get ahead in life, you have to put your best foot forward with positive impressions that make people want to remember you. Here are some key suggestions on making a positive and lasting first impression:

1. A warm smile never hurt anyone, and it can open doors.
2. A firm handshake sends the signal that you have self-confidence and mean business!
3. Your appearance tells people who see you that you respect and care about yourself.
4. When you look people in the eye as you are talking, you send out the message that you are a person in control—a person who is not afraid to meet people.
5. Your name is important. If you want people to remember it, say it so it can be heard!
6. Your attitude is showing—wear a good one!

I have never forgotten those Indian students I have had in my workshops over the years who stood tall, gave me a firm handshake, and smiled warmly and said, "Thank you for coming to our school" or "Thank you for teaching us." Somehow, I want to help these students succeed, get ahead, and see that others believe in them.

A good first impression can go a long way in opening a closed door. Show off your best, be your best, and then see how people treat you!

STEP 4

Know the Power of Words and Their Effect on People and You!

If Indian people could learn at an early age the power of simple words, they could turn their lives around, make a difference, and open the doors of opportunity.

When talking to Indian students, I have often asked them how many of them know all the "four-letter words." They smile and proudly raise their hands and say, "I do!" Many Indian students are bad spellers and writers, but somehow they know how to spell correctly the negative four-letter words that they spray paint on their tribal buildings or public buildings for everyone to see.

When I tell students I want them to learn some new four-letter words, they get all excited and their ears turn my way. The new words that I wish you would start learning are simple but powerful. They will make an impression on someone—believe me, they will. If you would start using these four-letter words today and retain them in your mind, something good will eventually happen to you!

Here are ten four-letter words to consider using when talking to others. The more you use them and mean what you say, the greater the impact!

The four-letter words of success:

1. I "CARE" about myself, my future, my life.
2. I "WANT" to change, have a better life; I WANT a chance!
3. I "WISH" the best for others and myself.
4. I "DARE" to be different because that is what it will take to get ahead, be happy, and be somebody.
5. I "LOVE" myself, my friends, and those who have been good to me.
6. I am not afraid to "WORK"—if that's what it takes to get somewhere in life, I am willing to "WORK" hard to get there!

7. I want to "GAIN" all the knowledge, schooling, and training I can so I can be ready to be chosen in the future.

8. I will "PRAY" for strength, vision, and hope; I will "PRAY" when things get hard for me.

9. I will "STOP" putting myself down, making fun of others, and doing ill to myself and others.

10. I want to be "TRUE" to those who trust me, rely on me, and respect me!

Besides some of these four-letter words I have offered for your consideration, there are other positive words that can have a powerful effect on people everywhere, anytime. Think for yourself how you would like to hear these words and how they would affect you.

"I really **trust** you and know I can **rely** on you!"

"**Thank you** for all you did for me."

"I am going to be **somebody** someday."

"I **appreciate** those who got me here and gave me a chance."

"I **believe** in myself and know what I want!"

"You are a **good person** and I **like you!**"

"You can **count on me** to get the job done."

"You are the **kind of friend** everyone should have!"

"The most **important person** I would like to **thank** is . . ."

"I am **willing** to try—help me!"

"I am not afraid to take a **risk** if it will help me be a **better** person."

STEP 5

KNOW WHEN TO SAY NO

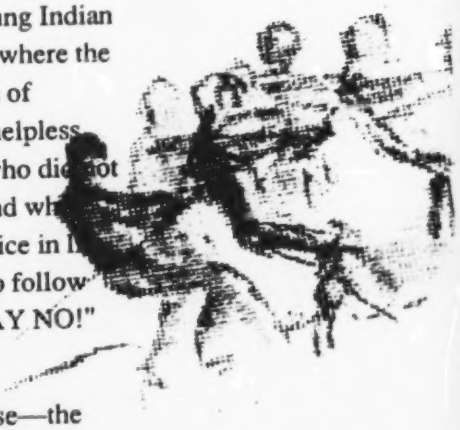
Sometimes in order to get ahead in life, you have to "SAY NO!" to someone you like--maybe a so-called friend or a group is trying to pressure you. I often hear the same old line from Indian youth, that "EVERYONE IS DOING IT" so I have to--that's a real "copout." Not everyone is doing bad, not everyone wants to be a doper, a boozer, a loser, a runaway.

At some time in your life YOU and ONLY YOU have to make a choice, a decision to follow or not to follow the crowd, be like all the rest, or take a different trail. I share

this short story with Indian youth in hopes that they will visualize and remember its symbolic meaning.

There was once a herd of buffalo thundering across the prairie toward a deep canyon. Think clouds of dust were everywhere as the buffalo raced toward the ravine. One of the buffalo yelled out to another galloping buffalo and said, "Hey, where are we headed? Where are we going?" The other buffalo just keep right on pouring on the speed and said, "I don't know; I'm just following the herd!" The questioning buffalo slammed on his brakes and let all the others hoof by, and they disappeared over the cliff in a cloud of dust.

The moral of this tale is: stop and think. Where is the crowd, the gang, or group of people taking you? Stop and think that most of them are following someone because they cannot see the dropoff for all the dust.

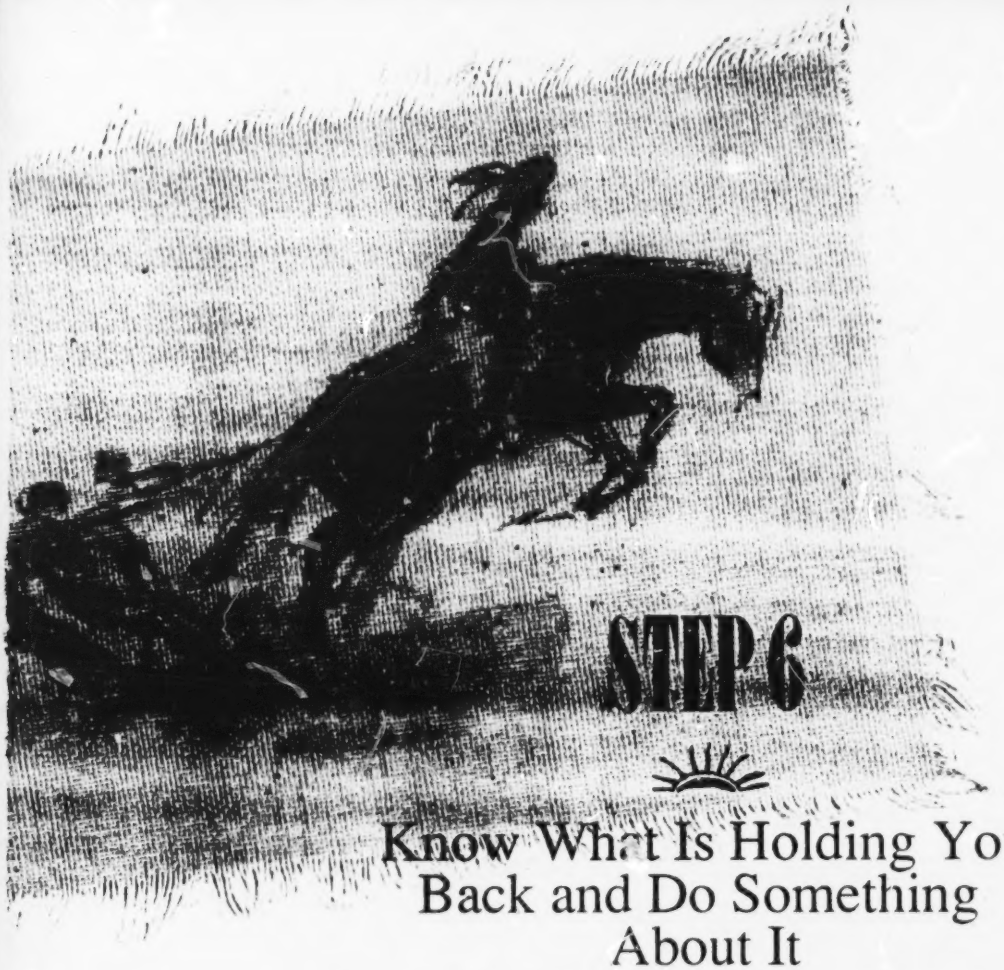


Our Indian cemeteries are full of grave markers of young Indian people who followed their so-called friends into a car where the driver was drunk. Many youth have run away because of problems at home, only to find themselves hopeless, helpless and exploited. There are many unhappy young girls who did not have the courage to "SAY NO!" to that so-called friend who said "I LOVE YOU" and got her pregnant. Every choice in life has lasting results or consequences. You don't have to follow everyone over the cliff. An Indian boy or girl can "SAY NO!" and have choices in their life.

The most powerful thing we have is the right to choose—the right to say no, the right to decide what we want in life. Look around the next time you are out with your friends and ask yourself: how many of them are taking drugs or drinking because they really want to, or does the pressure on them make them think they have no choice? Choices will have a negative or positive effect on our lives. Make sure you are one of those who knows what you want.

In a few places I have visited, I have seen the sorrow caused by people drinking alcohol. Way back these Indian men and women did not have the courage to "SAY NO!" and their lives have been ruined and they have ruined the lives of many others.

Dare to "SAY NO!" and mean it! People may make fun of you, get mad at you, and even leave you, but be the buffalo that slams on his brakes and watches all the others go over the cliff.



STEP 6

Know What Is Holding You Back and Do Something About It

I have met so many great Indian youth who have a lot of potential and promise, but something seems to hold them back. They are probably just like you who are talented, smart, good thinkers, and have a lot going for them, but something inside or that cannot be seen is like a ball and chain around their feet.

My friends, I was once like many of you. I knew I was just as smart as the guy sitting next to me in the classroom; I knew in my heart that I had talent to think, to organize, and to be a leader, but here are the things that held me back.

1. I was afraid that if I spoke up or raised my hand in the classroom, others would make fun of me and think I was trying to be the teacher's pet. I played the game of being shy, even though I knew the answers to a lot of the questions teachers would ask.

2. I was afraid to speak up or speak in front of the class because I thought if I said the wrong thing or used the wrong words, other kids would make fun of me.

3. I did my second best so I would look like the others and not stand out.

How many of you are playing this kind of losing game? The only rewards for these actions are not being chosen and being pushed aside by someone else.

I feel the most common reasons many Indian kids hold back are the following—see if I am right. We hold back our potential because:

1. We fear what others might think of us.
2. We don't want to appear stupid.
3. We want to be like everyone else.
4. We fear that we will fail and others will laugh at us.
5. We don't want to be rejected and therefore choose to be like others.
6. We don't want to look like a fool or be remembered as a nerd!
7. We are safer when we hold back because we don't have to risk anything.
8. We don't have the self-confidence to face others even though we know the answers.

Those days are gone for me when I hid behind the shadows of playing the shyness game. I have found out that in order to move ahead, get ahead, and be ahead, one has to finally take a risk and make a few mistakes. But the rewards are great.

I am one of the leading Indian photographers today in America, not because I am Indian, but because I believe in my abilities. I work hard at it and I sell the belief of my photographic worth to others.

Once at an exhibition of my photographs, a man came up to me and asked me now much one of my photographs was worth. I thought quickly to myself and then boldly told him, "This picture is worth $250." I looked him straight in the eye and waited for his reply. He said, "Who do I write the check out to?"

Indian young people, whatever is holding you back now will hold you back for the rest of your life. Like me, you finally have to take a few risks, take a few uneasy chances, and make a few mistakes. But, oh, how pleasing it is inside to realize that the heavy old ball and chain no longer hold back my potential and ability. I have broken away from the chains of self-pity and shyness.

(What if I had told the buyer of my photograph that I felt it was worth $25 or that he should give me what he felt it was worth?)

Think about it!

STEP 7

Know That You Do Make a Difference

If you want the door of opportunity to open your way or if you want someone to knock at your door and ask for your talents, abilities, and skills, there has to come a time in your life when you know in your heart that you can make a difference. One of the best examples I have to prove this point came from an incident in a small Indian community in South Dakota.

A few Sioux Indian youth who were tired of all the ugliness and shame of alcohol wanted to do something about it. Three concerned youth went to their tribal leaders and requested a meeting with the entire tribal council. The tribal councilman who told me this story said that the other councilmen, like him, thought that it would be no big deal and that it was "just kids," so they agreed.

To their amazement, the Indian youth poured into the tribal chambers. Over one hundred Sioux teenagers made their stand and told the council that they wanted the council to do away with several permits that would have allowed two liquor stores to be built near their housing projects. The councilman told me, "Howard, how could we refuse them? They meant business, and we **knew** it was right!"

Indian young people, one Indian can make a difference and one Indian with courage can significantly affect others. Look at what these three young Sioux did all on their own. They made a difference and may have helped stop the ugly cycle of broken homes, broken hearts, and little children with broken lives.

If you want to make a difference, sometimes you have to:

1. Take a stand when you know you are right.

2. Speak out so others will know you count.

3. Write your feelings down.

4. Tell your friends where you stand and don't back down.

5. Be around others like you who want to make a stand for something right.

6. Ask questions about why things can't be better and why we can't change them.

7. Help support others who are standing up for good things in your community.

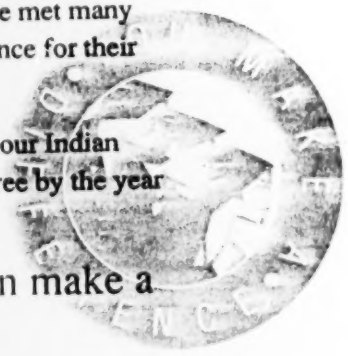
8. Get tough on those who are too weak to stand up for what is good for the school or for your community.

I look forward to the great day when I see an army of Indian youth go on the warpath against drugs and alcohol. I can't wait to see that day when our Indian youth speak out and take a stand to get rid of the number one problem holding us down.

What would happen if we saw a thousand Indian adults marching and protesting against liquor and drugs in their communities? What if they had another hundred determined Indian youth demanding a halt to liquor sales on their reservations?

It can all start with one Indian; you can make a difference in your own life, and you can make a difference in the lives of thousands of Indian people. I know because I have met many Indian men and women who are making a difference for their tribes, communities, and nation!

(Think about this —what would it be like to have our Indian reservations and communities alcohol and drug free by the year 2000?)



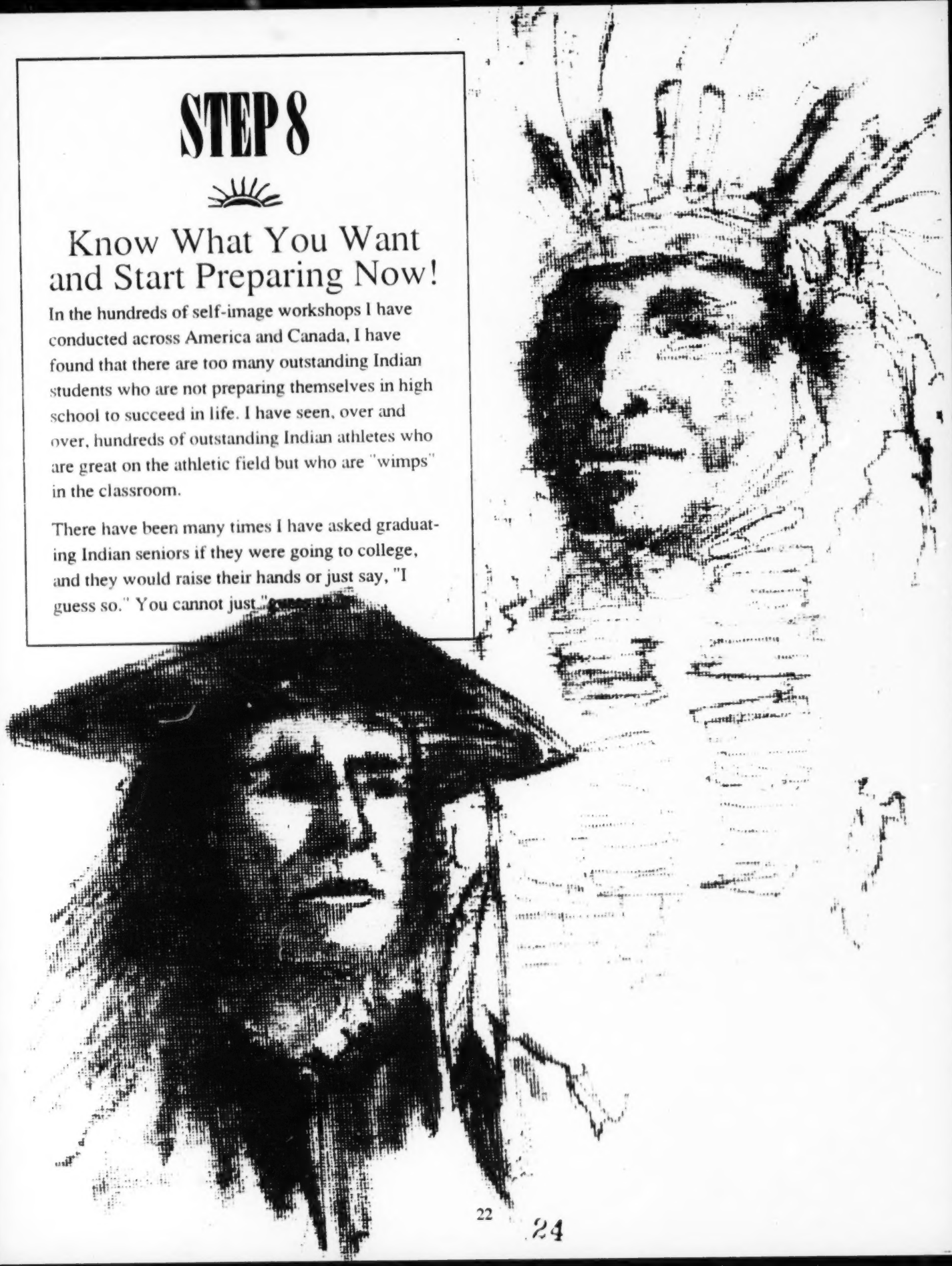
Would you be happier?—you can make a difference!

STEP 8

Know What You Want and Start Preparing Now!

In the hundreds of self-image workshops I have conducted across America and Canada, I have found that there are too many outstanding Indian students who are not preparing themselves in high school to succeed in life. I have seen, over and over, hundreds of outstanding Indian athletes who are great on the athletic field but who are "wimps" in the classroom.

There have been many times I have asked graduating Indian seniors if they were going to college, and they would raise their hands or just say, "I guess so." You cannot just "[illegible]



The Time Is Now!

The time is now to start preparing yourself for graduation and for the time beyond. I really wish someone had counseled me when I was a senior in high school. I thought I knew everything and was "too smart" to realize that preparation is the key to becoming a successful Indian.

Please keep these thoughts in mind as you plan for the future. I will use going to college as one example of how much careful preparation and planning it takes to be on top of things and to make college a real success for you. Even if you don't intend to go to college or a university, these suggestions can still apply in whatever you choose to do.

Suggestions for preparing yourself for college and for life beyond high school:

1. Your grades do count! Your grades in high school are important in helping you to get into a college or university. Good grades, not just passing grades, are important for your self-esteem as well.
   (The only way I know how to get good grades is to take the time to do your homework and study. The time is now to learn good study habits.)

2. Get into the habit of reading every day. This will improve your reading skills, writing skills, speaking skills, and thinking skills. It may be a big sacrifice to you now to read quietly by yourself somewhere instead of playing basketball. Think of the rewards ahead for you if you can read and write well now!

3. If you are having problems in some classes, seek help now. Don't wait and make the excuse that you don't care or that your teacher doesn't care.

4. Wear a positive attitude that you do care about your schooling. If you want teachers to care about you, then you have to care about yourself.

5. Make friends with teachers you like. Get them to write a letter of recommendation for you so when you need it in the future, you will have it. (A good letter of recommendation from a teacher is a VALUABLE thing to have in the future!)

6. Getting ready to take the ACT test is a must. You can prepare youself now by improving your reading and writing skills. (If you are a poor reader or writer—GET HELP NOW! I did when I was a junior in high school, and it paid off in ways that have helped me during my whole life.

7. Getting college admission applications sent in early is a must for those who are serious about going to college. Some schools require all kinds of applications and forms. Make sure you have them filled out accurately and sent in early.

8. Save your money now for college or the future. You cannot expect the government or the tribe to pay for everything. Earn part of your way, and you will appreciate your college education more. If you really want a college education, then earn it by making good grades and saving for it. Do you know how much it will cost to attend the school of your choice?

9. Find out what scholarships are available for you and how you can get one. Find out the names of people or organizations in charge of scholarships and see what it will take to attain one. Money is getting harder to come by, and careful planning is essential to your having enough money to complete four years of college or the special training you may want.

10. Talk to Indian people who have gone to college and have them give you ideas and suggestions on how to succeed in college. Those Indian students who have completed their college work can tell you that good study habits, personal sacrifice, hard work, and dedication are just a few of the prices you will have to pay.

Remember, anything in this life worth having requires sacrifice, hard work, and commitment from you!

I HAVE A GOAL

(Fill in the rest of the sentence)

1. I have a goal to . . .

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. I will commit myself to start on my goal on . . .

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3. I am willing to pay the price of fulfilling my goal by . . .

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4. The things that may hold me back from fulfilling my goal are . . .

_____
_____
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_____
_____

5. I have made a written commitment to fulfill my goal. It is to . . .

_____
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_____
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_____

STEP 9

Know That Failure Is a Part of Success

If honest, every successful Indian person will tell you that they have had their dark days of setbacks and failures. They never gave up, and that is why they are where they are today. All Indian artists, craftsmen, leaders, educators, and business people have experienced failure. But the difference was, they were brave enough to get up off the floor of defeat and try again. The best way I can demonstrate this is from my own life—how photography has taught me that failure is a part of success.

For over fifteen years, I have been photographing Indian people and reservation life throughout the United States and

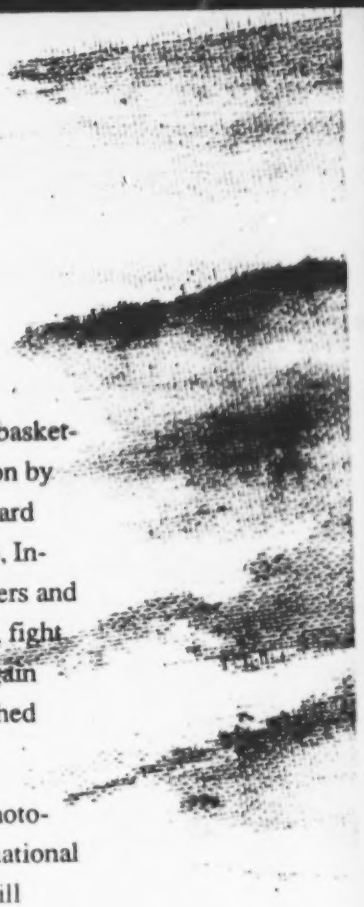
Canada. When I first started, I made all kinds of stupid mistakes like shooting when there was no film in the camera or using the wrong shutter speed (which will make your pictures too dark or overexposed). But the easiest way for serious photographers to feel like failures is when they feel they had a perfect shot, and then it comes back over- or underexposed or slightly blurred. This has happened to me many times.

I could have given up and said, "I'll never be a good photographer!" Today, if I fail with my pictures, I tell myself that there will be another chance. Then I find out where I made the mistake and try to correct it so it won't happen again. I am always trying to learn the proper rules of photography so there is less chance for error.

We cannot always have things go perfectly in life—and failure and setback do cross our path—but it is what you dare to do when they come that makes the difference. Those who have failed and are afraid to try again in a class or in sports soon start making excuses for holding back. They refuse to risk failure to gain a success.

Our Indian ancestors had plenty of good reasons to give up when they lost battles and had setbacks, but they dreamed of better days ahead for their grandchildren, such as you, and they were willing to sacrifice, get back on their feet, and fight again. If you have had your share of bad days, look ahead for better days on the horizon.

I know the great Sioux Indian runner, Billy Mills, had his days of defeat before he won his Olympic gold medal.

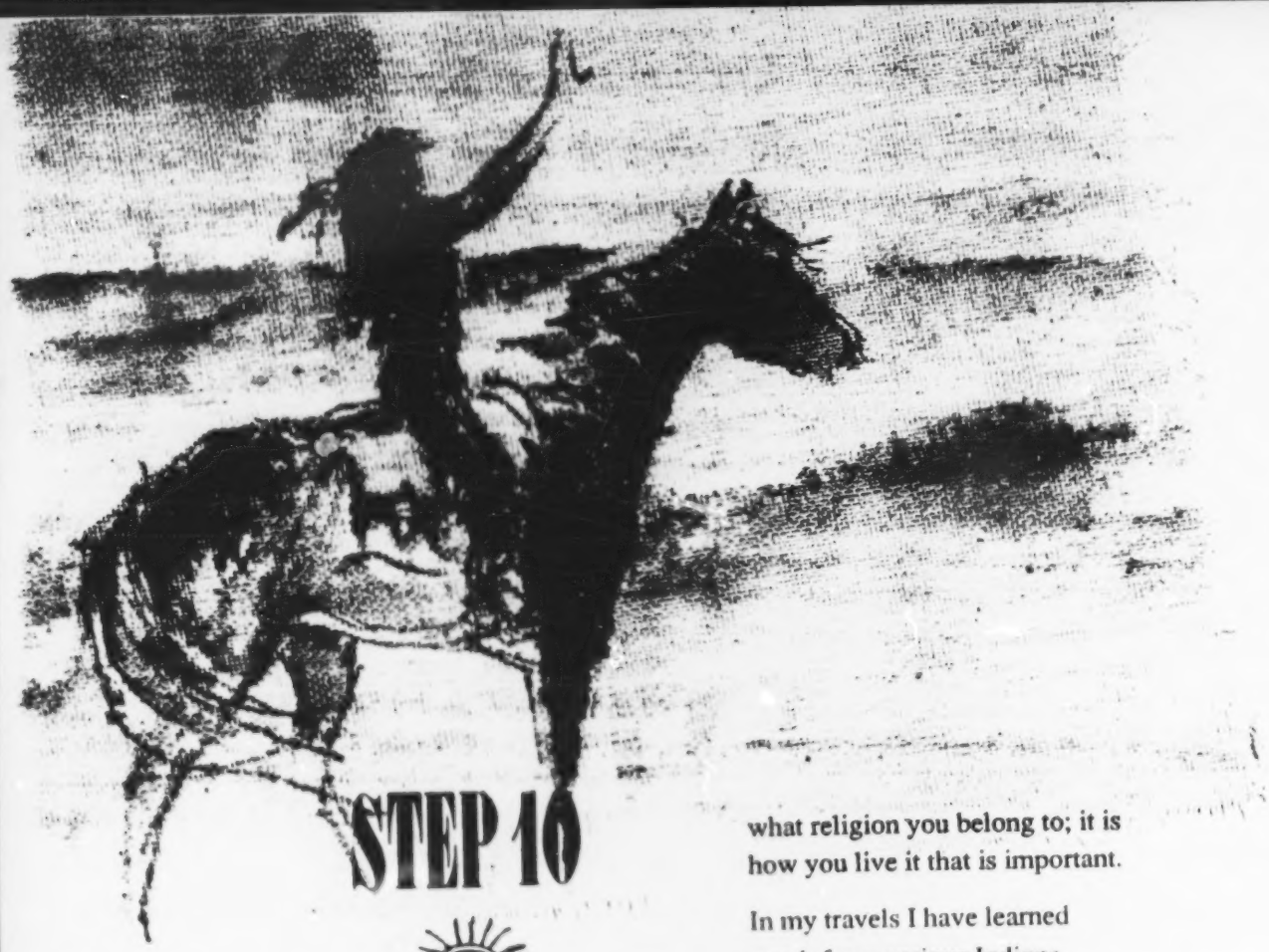


In a small Indian community in the Northwest I marveled at the courage of some Indian children who are homeless. Some have run away because of having no home, or were trying to escape the terrible things that happened at home. As I conducted a self-image workshop for them, I noticed they didn't act like they were about to give up or were feeling sorry for themselves. They wanted to make it through high school and beyond. I have so much respect for these kids because they showed me that day that despite all their dark days, they still believed in their future, still wanted to trust people, still yearned for love and friendship that was honest, and still wanted to be reunited with their families.

Do you think high school basketball championships are won by teams that give up when hard times come their way? No, Indian people who are winners and who are successful get up, fight back, and try again and again until they have accomplished what they want.

To date, I have had my photographs published in five national magazines, and there is still more I want to do. But I always remind myself that my success in photography was paid for with setback and failure—but I am willing to try again, again, and again . . . and then again!

How about you? Are you willing to try again?



STEP 10

Know That Strength and Inner Peace Come from Spiritual Roots

Of all the counsel or wisdom I could share with you after many years on the road and meeting thousands of Indian people, the most important is that the Indian who has spiritual roots will have a better life. I have met many outstanding men and women of all ages who are kind, generous, productive, caring, and successful because they have included spiritual values and religion in their lives. It does not matter **what religion you belong to; it is how you live it that is important.**

In my travels I have learned much from various Indians whose faith is strong and whose prayers are powerful. I can clearly recall a time when I was conducting an out-of-town workshop. I called home one night and learned that my little boy had become seriously ill and was rushed to the hospital. There was an old Paiute Indian woman who came up to me and said, "Mr. Rainer, you are doing good things for our young people, and when you get home, everything is going to be all right. You will have a good story to tell." I looked into her eyes, and I could tell that she meant every word. I knew she had the faith in God that things would be all right.

When I arrived at the hospital, I found my son was improving rapidly. I have met so many Indian people through the years who have helped me along with their humble prayers for my protection.

I did not always have faith in prayer, in God, or religion. It was my grandmother who lived on the Taos Pueblo reservation who taught me the value of spiritual roots. Many of our older Indian people have that light of goodness radiating from within, and I like to be around them because they are a spiritual people.

I have always tried to tell young people that if they include God in their lives, that he can help them succeed, heal their wounds when they have been hurt, and grant them peace during hard times. We do have a friend above the clouds, and he wants us to succeed and be happy. Great is the Indian person who knows where his power and talents come from and is grateful.

In my short lifetime I have traveled several hundred thousand miles back and forth across America, up to Alaska, and into Canada. I have heard of the plane crashes and other catastrophes that can come to travelers, but I know that when Indian people pray for me, like the old Indian man from Arizona or the young man in the Northwest or in Oklahoma, that someone is watching over me.

The greatest message I could leave you, whoever reads this manual, is to use the power of prayer in your life. Great changes for good can take place. They may not happen all at once, but they will eventually come.

Good things happen when one has faith in prayers. I met a young girl who was half black and half Indian. I knew from the first word of our conversation that she had had her dark days of ridicule and rejection by other Indian people.

She told me that there were times when she wanted to give up and felt so low about herself because people had treated her unjustly. Her mother had abandoned her when she was a little girl and she was fighting to get custody of her children. With so many challenges and heartaches, she said she wanted to give up.

We visited for three hours on the plane, and I was able to teach her some of the same principles found in this manual. She ended her conversation by telling me that just a couple of days before she had been praying that something good would happen to her and that she could see some hope in the future. As we parted, she smiled happily and said, "He does answer prayers, doesn't he!"

Your spiritual roots are important in your life, and you can always count on the Lord when others fail you. Our people in the past were able to endure much trial and sorrow because their hearts had been made strong by prayer and divine direction.

Find your spiritual roots, young people, and build a good relationship with your minister, pastor, priest, or religious leader. Learn the value of including religion and prayer in your life. You cannot go wrong by developing spiritual roots. This is a part of Indian tradition!

Final Thoughts

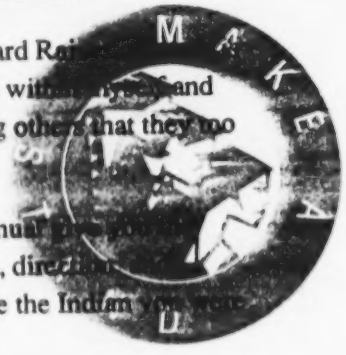
I have shared with you ten steps to help you attain personal satisfaction, strength, and direction in your life. These words of counsel have come from the heart and are words of wisdom from experiences gained in traveling and meeting thousands of young Indian people.

Some Indian youth might read the first five pages and say, "I don't need this stuff" or "It's not for me." They might say, "It won't work for me because I am different."

Howard Rainer was not born with a silver spoon in his mouth. I have experienced prejudice, ridicule, low self-esteem, defeat, and rejection, but I am still on the good "red road," as some might say. I am still having personal success, inner peace, and opportunity because I have used these principles in my own life.

Our Indian people have not even begun to show their greatness or potential in America. It is my hope that this generation of Indian youth can show our Indian communities, this country, and the world that we have something important to contribute.

The young Indian man who said, "I am ready to be an Indian leader now, not tomorrow," was right. Start now to think for yourself, control yourself, make for yourself those right choices that will bring you onto the path of progress and success.



To me, Howard Rainer having peace with [illegible] and joy in serving others that they too may find it.

May this manual [illegible] light of hope, direction, strength to be the Indian you were meant to be.

No one can stop you
if you have a purpose
and prayer behind you!

HEAR MY WORDS

I gave the following talk at an Indian graduation in 1988. I want to share it with you, that you may use and share it with others to catch the vision of the new Indian revolution awaiting our Indian people. May it be a source of inspiration and fire to help you catch your personal vision of what we can be and should be as Indian people.

Is this the right time for a new American Indian revolution to begin?

I SAY YES, IT IS! The new revolution or movement in Indian America can start today—at this gathering—if just one of you would catch this same vision I am going to share with you.

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Because of the thousands of outstanding Indian people whom I have met and the countless numbers of Indian youth who are anxious and ready for a movement, I present to you my Master Plan of Action to get this revolution off the ground:

FIRST STEP: THERE MUST BE A REVOLUTION OF THE INDIAN MIND!

(A) All of us must begin to rethink what is good about ourselves. You and I cannot begin any powerful Indian movement with Indian people thinking themselves inferior or that their minds are filled with darkness. They cannot believe they are not smart or creative or that they have no talents. Your mind is ready anytime you are to learn new things, change self-defeating attitudes, and be used to its fullest. Ladies and gentlemen, put the past where it belongs—and get on with the possibilities of the present! Ask yourself today, what is my potential, my possibility, my power?

(B) We need to reevaluate our purpose in life. In other words, what is your mission on this earth? What are your priorities in life? What good are you destined to do?

(C) We need, today, to reshape our personal destinies. Where are we heading? What are we capable of accomplishing? What bonds should we be building with our families and friends? The sooner Indian adults start talking about a better future, the faster it will come for our youth.

SECOND STEP: REVITALIZE THE BODY

We must aggressively, I repeat, *aggressively* resist alcohol and drugs that have kept thousands of Indian people helpless and ashamed for too long. You and I need to be the new Indian, the real Indian—**don't drink!**

Start restoring strength to your body through exercise to build endurance. You will have the physical strength you need when things get rough.

Regain good health through proper eating habits. Find out what food is good or bad and prepare the best you can afford for yourself and your families.

We cannot have a generation of unfit Indian youth who are junk-food addicts, relying on pop and fast foods that will eventually put on weight they will never take off. We must have good health if we are going to build a strong Indian America with alert, active Indian people of all ages.

THIRD STEP: BEGIN TO DEVELOP YOUR SELF-RELIANCE AND SELF-RESPECT

We need to regain our hidden power of influence by putting the following four priorities into action.

First Priority: Indian family unity and teaching our youth how to succeed in marriage and family life should be a high priority. We cannot have more broken homes, broken hearts, and shattered hopes in families and expect to have a proud race. I have such a great respect for those brave Indian mothers who sacrifice so much to raise their children by themselves. Who honors them? Who encourages them?

Second Priority: Higher education is vital to prepare our Indian people to take complete control of their lives.

Third Priority: Economic power is the key to non-Indians' taking a second serious look at us and respecting the Indian's new position. When we have Indian businesses growing and making a profit everywhere, that will bring Indian power with respect!

Fourth Priority: Indian youth development—Parents need to help get thousands of Indian youth through high school and college and prepare them for life. For this movement, we need skilled workers and professional Indians who can produce by example and encouragement, not just talk.

Let's redeem what we have lost; let's start showing off our best talents and abilities. **Stand up and be noticed!**

- Let's regain our Indian Power by using it!
- Political clout is at the ballot box.
- Economic power is Indian business making a contribution for good as well as a profit.
- Treaty and tribal rights are your rights.

You should have a say in your indian community.

Solutions to many of our problems lie within you. Challenges and setbacks facing reservations today can be changed by you!

FOURTH, AND MOST IMPORTANT STEP: REBIRTH OF THE SPIRIT!

Review your life today and ask yourself this important question—Do I have inner peace and harmony in my life? Is there a raging battle going on inside you? Now is the time to take affirmative action! Get rid of the monkeys on your back—hatred will eat up the heart! Guilt just generates shame! Stay away from places that will bring you sorrow.

Here are four simple ways to gain or regain spiritual strength:

1. Regain your inner strength by personal, daily private prayer. Power and strength are given to those who ask for them.
2. Recommit yourself to God the Creator; there will be peace and power come into your own life in due time.
3. Feed your spirit with good uplifting things. Restore it by forgiving othes and forgetting and forsaking your past.
4. How much spiritual power would we have as Indian people if our churches and chapels were filled to capacity this next Sunday?

Yes, this Indian revolution, this movement, can happen. It can have the power to spread all over Indian America.

If you don't think we have this power, laugh at my words! Then we will have to wait another hundred years. Can we afford the wait? Are you ready and willing to sacrifice for the new Indian revolution? Then stand up and say, "COUNT ME IN!"

What are you waiting for?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mr. Howard T. Rainer is a Taos Pueblo–Creek Indian from Taos Pueblo, New Mexico. He has been a national trainer and educator of Indian youth for over twenty years. His extensive travels have taken him to Indian villages, pueblos, reservations, rancherias, Indian communities throughout the United States and reserves in Canada.

Recognized as a successful Native American photographer and poet, he has published two self-image manuals for Indian youth for national distribution. He has produced and directed several videotape productions and has created multimedia presentations on Indian life and alcohol prevention-related subjects.

Mr. Rainer's dedication to the advancement of Indian youth has led him to develop a National Leadership Development Program for Exceptional Indian Youth that has enabled over two hundred Indian young people to receive intensive training under his direction and leadership. He is a strong advocate of education for Indian people, and his commitment to provide opportunity and training to Indian youth has been felt by those who have come to know him as their friend.

His involvement in writing this publication for the American Indian and Alaska Native Youth 2000 project is his commitment for all Indian young people and their future.

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MY DREAMS HOPES AND VISIONS

MY DREAMS

To fulfill the prayers of my
ancestors
Who once asked in faith
That their grandchildren might
rise up
And achieve noble things.

MY HOPES

To stand proud,
Conquer my doubts,
Bring honor to my Creator and
My people.

MY VISIONS

To look beyond the dark days
Of discouragement and defeat,
And discover the sunrise
Of my potential, power, and genius.
I can see the bright days ahead.

This is my day
To lead, to speak, to live!

Distribution of this book to Indian youth was
made possible by
Administration for Children, Youth, and Families
Administration for Native Americans
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Department of Health and Human Services

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